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ABSTRACT

The processes of prewriting, writing, revising, and proofreading are outlined in this four-page guide for writing center volunteers. Each section lists "things to remember" and provides ideas on "how to help students" when teaching these four stages of the writing process. (JW)

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GUIDELINES FOR WRITING CENTER VOLUNTEERS

Revisions

and

Proofreading

Writing

Pre-Writing

WRITING IS A PROCESS

CS207561

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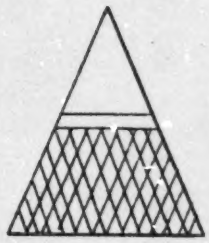
Prewriting



Prewriting is the first stage of the writing process. All the writer's experiences, both real and vicarious (reading, television viewing, etc.), are technically part of prewriting. When students are preparing to write a specific piece (story, essay, description, letter, summary, report, poem, etc.) they will naturally draw on their experiences.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT PREWRITING

- Writing often begins with talk. The prewriting session should provide time for conversation between the volunteer and writer.
  - Talk about what he/she knows about the topic assignment.
  - Talk about ideas.
  - Talk about words and phrases related to ideas and the topic.
  - Talk about the sequence, or order, in which the ideas will be presented.

- Words are the major building blocks in the foundation of written communication. Children gain confidence and sophistication through word play.

- Children gain fluency and confidence by forming their thoughts into oral sentences.

HOW TO HELP STUDENTS WITH PREWRITING

When a specific piece has been assigned, volunteers can structure prewriting activities by. . .

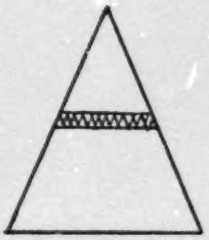
- Helping students make lists of words and phrases related to the topic, such as . . .
  - Feelings words
  - Action words
  - A variety of interesting words (Help students use the thesuarus.)
  - "What I know" about the subject
  - A 1-2-3 list of what's going to happen (a rough, not formal, outline)

  Send the list(s) back to class with the writer unless he/she is going to write the first draft with you.

- Asking questions related to the topic and or the lists of words such as. . .
  - What do you see? (Ask them to close their eyes to see.)
  - What sounds would you hear in a . . .?
  - How cold was it when. . . ?
  - What are all the ways. . . ?
  - What happened to make it. . . ?
  - What if. . . ?
  - What will happen next. . . ?
  - Why. . . ?

- Encouraging non-stop talking about the topic. After the child has made lists and talked through the questions, the volunteer may ask the child to talk non-stop for one minute about the subject or topic.

Writing



Writing the first draft is the second stage of the writing process. The writer, after having explored words and ideas during the prewriting activities, will put on paper what he/she wishes to communicate.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

- Writing the first draft usually requires the least amount of time of any stage in the writing process.
- The purpose of writing the first draft is to get ideas on paper, not to spell every word correctly, or to write mechanically perfect sentences.
- The first draft points out how much and/or how little the writer knows about the subject.
- The first draft is rough and unfinished.

HOW TO HELP STUDENTS WITH WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

- Take dictation from the young or reluctant writer. Sometimes you and the student may take turns doing the actual writing.
- Encourage the writer with comments such as:

  That's a good idea!
  I like this sentence.
  I can see what you're describing.
  That's an interesting word you've used.

- If the student asks, tell her/him how to spell words or answer questions about punctuation, capitalization, etc.

Revising

Revising is the part of the writing process in which the author makes decisions to clarify intended meanings for the audience (reader). Revising the first draft may simplify language, eliminate redundancy, add specifics, tie the piece together logically, and give it punch.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT REVISING

- ▲ Be positive and supportive of the child's efforts.
- ▲ Offer alternative ways for the author to make a change.
- ▲ Let the child choose among the alternatives.
- ▲ Wait for the child's decisions. Give ample think time.
- ▲ Be aware that many times there is no "right" way to write something. Often revisions are individual judgments, and the child learns by making those judgments.
- ▲ Realize that everything can't be changed on one paper. The magic words are "Next time you write a story you might want to think about. . . . "

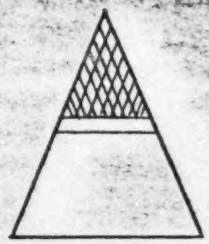
HOW TO HELP STUDENTS WITH REVISING

In working with individual children on revision, try to keep the writer's original ideas intact.

- ▲ Have the child read the piece aloud. Use a tape recorder if there is one available. Students may need to read all or part of the piece more than once.
- ▲ Focus on one or two areas for improvement by asking questions such as:
  - Is this the logical order for the events?
  - Does the writing move smoothly from one idea to the next?
  - Did you hear any word(s) that was overused?
  - Can you think of a better word to use?
  - Would the meaning be clearer if you rearranged some words?
  - Is there another way to say that?
  - Why did the character do that?
  - Why did you choose that word?

  There is usually no "right" response to the questions. Be non-judgmental in your response.
- ▲ Consult with the teacher and/or other volunteers.

Proofreading



Proofreading is the final stage of the writing process in which the author finds and corrects errors in spelling, punctuation and capitalization, (often referred to as the mechanics of writing). When proofreading has been completed, the piece of writing should be ready for final copy, sharing, and/or publication.

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT PROOFREADING

- ▲ Proofreading and revising are two different tasks.
- ▲ In many instances, children's ability to express themselves is beyond their ability to punctuate, capitalize and spell correctly. In other words, the child has good ideas, but has not yet learned to correctly use all the mechanics of writing.
- ▲ The child's ability to recognize errors in the mechanics of writing is a part of learning and indicates progress.
- ▲ Concern with understanding error is an integral part of the proofreading process.

HOW TO HELP STUDENTS WITH PROOFREADING

When proofreading, have the child concentrate on finding one type of error at a time. (For instance, look for spelling errors OR quotation mark errors.)

- ▲ Ask the student to read the piece aloud. For example, remind him/her that when the voice drops, that may cue the end of a sentence, and that a mark of punctuation is needed. A pause in the sentence may signal the need for a comma.
- ▲ Ask the child to recall the rules he/she has learned, and encourage him/her to apply them. (Ex. Capital letter rules)
- ▲ Work through the piece backwards to find spelling errors.
- ▲ If the proofreading job is overwhelming for a child, call attention to one line in which a specific error appears, and ask the child to find the error. If he/she is unable to spot the error, tell him/her what it is and discuss why.